

News Items and Public Crime Summary for Week Ending June 5, 2010

Aruba - Valero Says Aruba Ok's Refinery Tax Settlement Deal

Aruba approved a tax settlement deal on Saturday for San Antonio-based Valero Energy's idled 235,000 barrel per day refinery, a company spokesman said on Monday. The agreement leads the way to resolve all tax issues pertaining to the Valero Aruba Refinery, and as Valero considers strategic alternatives for the plant, a settlement will help make the refinery more viable for Valero and for any future buyer.

"This gives clarity to the cost structure and an idea for potential future costs. It may lead to some decision making," said Bill Day, a spokesman for the company.

Under the terms of the settlement, Valero would pay the government US \$112 million and make a minimum tax payment of \$10 million per year.

The refinery was shut in July 2009, due to financial losses caused by the poor economy, the narrow price differential between heavy sour and light sweet crude oils, and the disputed issues.

Valero has kept all employees on the payroll until the June 1 deadline for the Parliament to approve the settlement. AVP party-leader Rene Herd  believes the new laws provide the basis for the settlement and is positive for a possible refinery re-start. The latest development improves Valero's chances to negotiate with potential take-over candidates such as Petrobras and Pemex, according to Herd . (Various media)

St. Maarten – New Police Commissioner De Witte Starts Today

Chief Commissioner for the Windward Islands Police Force KPSSS, Peter de Witte starts his new job today. The former Aruban Police Chief replaces Chief Commissioner Derrick Holiday, who was involved in a fraud scandal. (Various media)

Curacao - Inmates Riot at Bon Futuro Prison

Cura ao's "Bon Futuro" prison inmates rioted against an announced process to "sanitize" the penitentiary, including all the cells, with Dutch assistance. Inmates destroyed cell doors, placed barricades and set a fire. The situation was quickly normalized and nobody was injured. (Various media)

Aruba – Fire at WEB Causes Blackout

A transformer fire and a defective boiler caused a blackout at the water and electricity company WEB last Friday. The issue was resolved within three hours, the Utility Company spokesperson said. (Various media)

Aruba – NA&A Coast Guard Confiscates 10 Kilos of Marijuana

The NA&A Coast Guard pulled 10 kilos of marijuana from the water after a small boat was set on fire upon arrival of the Coast Guard super-rhibs. The crew of the boat was arrested. (Various media)

Curacao – Playboy International Wins IPR Case Against FreeZone Company

A judge has ruled that a company, established in the Curacao FreeZone, must stop selling counterfeit Playboy International merchandise. Playboy International claimed that counterfeit products travel through the Curacao Free Trade Zone and end up all over Latin America. The sale of these fake items results in losses in the millions of dollars for Playboy. (Extra)

St. Maarten – U.S. Citizen Dies Under Mysterious Circumstances

Police in St. Maarten say they have found the body of a U.S. citizen who died under mysterious circumstances. A police spokesman says authorities found the body of 32-year-old Kevin Duggan Woods of Reno, Nevada, in bushes before dawn Monday. Police had gone to the area because neighbors reported hearing someone call for help. Spokesman Ricardo Henson says there was a heavy downpour at the time and officers could not find anyone in the steep terrain. Later, they called out firefighters, who cut a path through the bushes and found the man. Henson says the man had cuts and bruises but the cause of death is unknown and the case is under investigation. During this search a small amount of cash, a VISA credit card and a U.S. driver's license of the victim were found and confiscated. The police are asking anyone with any information on Kevin Duggan Woods, to please call 011-59954-22222 ext. 225/222/ 224. (Various media)

Aruba - Natalee Holloway Resource Center Opens in Washington, DC

The mother of an Alabama teen who disappeared five years ago in Aruba is opening a resource center to help families of missing persons. Beth Holloway has created the Natalee Holloway Resource Center, named for her daughter who went missing during a high school graduation trip to Aruba. The center will be based at the National Museum of Crime & Punishment in downtown Washington. The nonprofit center aims to provide families with an action plan, examples of missing person posters, contacts, media liaisons and other services to guide families during crises. Officials also say they will provide educational programs on safe traveling and crime prevention and encourage careers in forensic science and law enforcement. The center will launch on June 8. For more information visit: <http://helpthemissing.org> (Aruba Post)

Aruba - International Film Festival Features U.S. Productions

The inaugural International Film Festival in Aruba will honor Oscar winning Italian director Bernardo Bertolucci (The Last Emperor, Last Tango in Paris, The Conformist) with The Golden Aruba Award for outstanding achievement in film as part of the festivities. Actor Richard Gere, the official 'host' of the fest, will receive a humanitarian award and participates in a "Conversation With" evening. Also, the June 4-11, festival features various U.S. productions. <http://www.arubafilmfest.com/> (Aruba Post)

Curacao – Baoase Resort Makes Condé Nast Hot List 2010

The Baoase Luxury Resort has won a coveted place on Condé Nast Traveler's exclusive 14th Annual Hot List for 2010, one of only four Caribbean properties to do so. The resort was selected along with 133 other top new hotels spread across 55 countries, boasting the latest and greatest in style, service, technology, and atmosphere. (Antilliaans Dagblad)

St. Maarten – Appeal Former Police Commissioner Holiday Rejected

Former Sint Maarten Police Chief Commissioner Derrick Holiday was sentenced by the Court of First Instance to four months suspended sentence with three years' probation and a US \$6,000 fine on forgery charges in October 2008. Holiday appealed his sentence twice. The High Court in The Hague has rejected the appeal by former police chief commissioner Derrick Holiday. The Joint Court's verdict of March 2009 was upheld, which means that Holiday will remain banned from performing police tasks. (Various media)

Aruba – Natalee Holloway Case Suspect Wanted for Murder

Aruban prosecutor Peter Blanken, who has been part of the investigation into the disappearance of Natalee Holloway, has learned that Joran van der Sloot is now a suspect in a new murder, that of a 21-year-old woman whose body was found in a hotel room in Lima, Peru.

Early Wednesday morning, Stephany Flores Ramirez was found dead, Peruvian newspaper El Comercio reports, in a hotel room registered under van der Sloot's name. Aruban Prosecutor Peter Blanken said that an Interpol international arrest warrant has been issued for van der Sloot, who may, according to some reports, be on the run from police. The Dutch Foreign Affairs Department in the Netherlands has notified their people in Chile to be aware that Joran may be in Chile.

Five years ago, in May 2005, Alabama high school student Natalee Holloway disappeared during a senior class trip to Aruba. She was last seen leaving a bar with Joran van der Sloot. Van der Sloot has been detained several times, but never charged. According to Blanken, he is examining the new details but does not expect it to affect the Holloway case or provide new evidence. He says that they will be contacting the Peruvian authorities later today to see if they can offer assistance. (Various media)

St. Maarten – Judge Rules in “Ajada” Human Smuggling Case

The two main suspects in the “Ajada” human smuggling tragedy – extradited by the U.S. – were sentenced to 60 and 54 months by the Court of First Instance on Wednesday. U.S. police arrested R.R. (36) and his wife M.R. (35) on an unrelated charge of shoplifting in March, after which American officials realized they were wanted in St. Maarten for human smuggling. The couple had been involved in the tragic January 2009 human-smuggling boat trip that ended with more than 13 men, women and children dead. They are the last two persons believed to be behind the “Ajada” tragedy in which a boat from St. Maarten sank off the British Virgin Islands with 25 illegal immigrants from Haiti and Sri Lanka who were trying to go to the U.S.

Other suspects in the smuggling case have already been sentenced to prison terms of six to 34 months. (Daily Herald)

Curacao – Goedgedrag First Governor-General of Curacao?

Current Antillean Governor-General Frits Goedgedrag will reportedly be nominated to become the first Governor of Curaçao on 10-10-10. (La Prensa)

Bonaire – Island Council: Constitutional Referendum Before Oct. 1

The Bonaire Island Council unanimously approved a motion, submitted by the governing ADB/Nicolaas coalition, for a constitutional referendum before October 1.

Netherlands Antilles Governor Frits Goedgedrag annulled Bonaire's request to hold a referendum concerning their constitutional future, earlier this year. Goedgedrag ruled that the referendum could inflict disproportionate damage to the interests of the Kingdom partners and conflicts with the International Human Rights Treaty. Also, the referendum contravenes international law by limiting the voting rights of European Dutch nationals. The referendum question and the determination of who can vote in the referendum have changed since. The restricted voting rights for all Dutch citizens and foreigners residing on the island were eased. The minimum age has been set at 16 (18 for elections). The new referendum question is: "I agree with the negotiation result concerning the future constitutional structure of Bonaire," to be answered "yes" or "no."

Various Dutch politicians fear that the referendum could seriously obstruct the current dismantling process. (Various media)

St. Maarten – U.S. Convicted Criminal In Jail For Murder

The trial against 40-year old Jamaican A.R.S., held responsible for the Christian Lloyd murder on January 23, was postponed until September 22 by judge Monique Keppels. The Public Prosecutor accuses the man of having shot and killed Lloyd in his St. Peter's home. The suspect, who is residing illegally in St. Maarten, is no stranger to the Police. A.R.S. was sentenced in the United States to 47 years for various violent crimes and arms possession. A.R.S. will remain behind bars until the next hearing. (Daily Herald)

Aruba – Manhunt For Van Der Sloot is Over

Joran van der Sloot was taken into custody by Chilean police yesterday. Van der Sloot is being held in Santiago, and police are awaiting orders on how to proceed with the Dutchman.

"He will either be returned to Peru or released under supervision in Chile, however both paths eventually lead to his return to Lima," says Inspector Rodriguez.

Van der Sloot – once a suspect in the 2005 disappearance in Aruba of U.S. teen Natalee Holloway – is wanted in Peru for questioning in the case of 21-year-old Stephany Flores, found dead in a Lima hotel room Wednesday.

A lawyer for van der Sloot in New York, Joe Tacopina, told the Associated Press that he did not know his client's whereabouts and had not been in touch with him since the Peru allegations emerged. Mr. Tacopina cautioned against a rush to judgment. (Various media)

Aruba - Valero plans to restart Aruba refinery this year

San Antonio-based Valero Energy Corp said on Thursday it plans to restart its 235,000-barrel-per-day refinery in Aruba, on improving refinery margins.

Valero said it will soon begin maintenance on its Aruba refinery with the aim of possibly restarting the plant later this year, depending on economic conditions.

The refinery-wide maintenance which will prepare all of the refinery's production units for restart, will begin in the next few weeks and is expected to last about 90 days, Valero said. The Aruba plant makes semi-finished feedstocks that are then shipped to other refineries to be made into gasoline and diesel.

Valero, the nation's largest independent refiner shut the Aruba plant in July due to financial losses caused by the poor economy, the narrow price differential between heavy sour and light sweet crude oils, and disputed tax issues.

The refinery provides 30 to 35 percent of the Aruba's GDP and employs more than 4,000 Arubans. Employees have remained on the payrolls since the shutdown of the refinery pending a June 1 deadline for the Aruba Parliament to approve a tax settlement.

The Aruban Government worked out a package of incentives to reinforce the refinery's profitability. On Saturday, Aruba approved a tax settlement deal for the refinery.

"The tax settlement agreement recently approved by the Aruba Parliament has provided Valero the visibility on future taxes so that it could make the decision to restart the refinery," the company said in a statement.

Various positive efforts by the Eman Administration in Aruba have led to Valero's announcement today that the production process will be resumed within three months.

Prime Minister Mike Eman: "With this proactive and solution oriented approach Aruba shows that it is able to offer international companies a very attractive investment climate." (Various media)

St. Maarten – Cruise Arrivals Up

Cruise arrivals in St. Maarten are up 3.7% for the first five months of 2010 compared to the same period in 2009. The St. Maarten Harbor group projects 1,454,274 cruise passengers by the end of the year. (Daily Herald)

CURAÇAO

Crime May 28 – June 3

On June 1 three masked men attempted to steal the ATM in the Avila Beach Hotel. After causing considerable damage, the suspects discovered that the ATM had been bolted to the floor. They subsequently fled the area (Extra, Antilliaans Dagblad, Amigoe).

ATMs favorite target for thieves

On June 1, three armed robbers attempted to remove the ATM from the Avila Beach Hotel in Punda after overpowering the security guards. While this robbery failed (the ATM had been bolted to the floor), it was the fourth of its kind in recent months. Earlier, ATMs at the Lions Dive Hotel (Bapor Kibrá), Hilton Hotel (Piscadera) and The Movies (Scharloo) had also been the target of thieves. The various robberies are still under investigation but to date, no suspects have been apprehended by police (Antilliaans Dagblad, La Prensa).

ARUBA

Crime May 28 – June 3

On May 30 a suspect attempted to rob a tourist couple in Oranjestad. When the couple noticed the man's suspicious behavior they ran away (Diario Aruba).

ST. MAARTEN

Crime May 28 – June 3

On May 28 there were three reported robberies, two of which occurred in Cole Bay and one in Philipsburg (St. Maarten Island Time).

"The Weekly Press Summary is a compilation of stories running in the Netherlands Antilles and Aruban press that is intended to alert readers about items of interest to them. There is no interpretation or verification of the facts contained therein."